

DRAFT - Downtown Improvement Committee

Meeting Minutes

July 8th, 2016

1. Call to Order and Welcome

A regular meeting of the Nashua Downtown Improvement Committee was called to order at 7:50 a.m. on July 8, 2016 in Nashua City Hall, Room 208 by Chairman Marylou Blaisdell.

Members Present: Marylou Blaisdell, Richard Lannan, Simon Sarris, Sy Mahfuz, Ron LeFleur
City Staff: T. Cummings, Sarah Marchant, Jill Stansfield, James Vayo
Members of the Public: Paul Shea

2. Approval of May 13th, 2016 Meeting Minutes

**MOTION MADE BY S. MAHFUZ TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 13th 2016.
SECONDED BY R LANNAN AND APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Update from the Downtown Parking Coordinator

J. Stansfield provides a description of her role and responsibility as the parking coordinator. Responsibilities include improvements to the garage maintenance, parking permits, and meter/pay station maintenance and improvements. J. Stansfield recommends looking at extending the parking time limit on Main Street from the 90 minute limit to two hours.

R. Lannan notes that he was surprised to learn that parking leases are only from 7am to 5pm on weekdays and that there should be better signage to let visitors know that parking downtown after 5pm in reserved spaces is allowed.

J. Vayo how do we format parking in a way that makes it most approachable to consumers. J. Vayo describes the concept of intermingling 100% lot metering with parking sticker/permits on a lot by lot basis. This would reduce the stress

R. Lannan notes that he passes off the cost of leasing spaces to his tenants and they would be upset if they were ever not able to park in the lot. R. Lannan notes that the idea of mingling the meter spaces with stickers is a good idea as long as the lots do not hit full occupancy more than once or twice a year.

S. Mahfuz notes that permits could just come with a caveat that lots may be full for some major downtown events. S. Mahfuz suggests J. Stansfield reach out to a few other communities to find out what parking systems work best. S. Mahfuz notes that there is some aversion to parking in city garages and the lots further from Main Street and asked why that is the case.

M. Blaisdell asks that the parking discussion be picked up again in the agenda of the September Committee meeting.

4. Downtown Circulator Trolley Update

S. Marchant provides an update on the Downtown Trolley Circulator. There were over 400 rides in the month of June. S. Marchant notes the rides start at 6pm on Friday and 5:15pm on Saturday. The route goes between the Transit Center on Elm Street and Railroad Square. The ridership is strongest early in the evening but people continue to ride throughout the evening service. S. Marchant continues to explain the ticketing system and the marketing with specific note to the services provided by Pearl Marketing.

S. Mahfuz suggest providing some reverse marketing by having the restaurants handing out a form of the trolley ticket that let people know

S. Marchant suggests the Downtown Improvement Committee consider continue funding the circulator service into FY17 by adding this to their list when reviewing their funding priorities in August.

5. Wayfinding Sign Package

M. Blaisdell requests an update on when the blue “P” parking signs will be installed on Main Street.

S. Marchant will continue to communicate to DPW about the need to install the parking signs.

M. Blaisdell asks what the process will be for funding the sign shortfall.

J. Vayo notes that the RFP process is nearly complete and the design work will begin shortly, the selected service provider is highly qualifies and the Downtown Improvement Committee will have opportunities to review draft concepts once the data and existing conditions have been collected.

S. Mahfuz asks what the estimated cost of the work will be and how much fabrication will cost.

J. Vayo notes his rough guess is that the design work will be approximately \$60k and fabrication will be a similar amount.

S. Mahfuz notes that the City of Nashua should identify sources of funds outside surplus parking meter revenue to meet the shortfall of funding for the signage.

S. Marchant explains that the advocacy of committee members during the upcoming finance committee meeting will be important to help move forward priority projects.

T. Cummings suggests the committee plan on meeting monthly for the near future.

6. 2016 Downtown Survey

M. Blaisdell introduces the 2016 Downtown Survey Summary and asks J. Vayo to highlight the results.

Vayo J. covers the highlights of the survey data and makes some suggestions about revisions to the survey for next year to make data more usable. Items of interest in the survey included: number of responses, percentage of respondents which are residents, the percentage of respondents planning to stay in downtown, parking preferences, percentage of employees who also live downtown, social media & marketing.

P. Shea suggests it would be of interest to see the data on those who wish to stay or grow their time in downtown separated by resident or non-resident.

S. Mahfuz asks what the survey is really telling us about downtown and notes that most important responses are on page three of the survey.

J. Vayo notes what priorities were selected by survey respondents.

M Blaisdell wishes to know who from the survey wants to see a movie theater in downtown.

T. Cummings notes that the market will dictate if a movie theater is possible in Downtown Nashua and gives a few examples of smaller independent theaters in the region.

S. Mahfuz suggests Alec's Shoes may be a great fit for a small independent movie theater if there was someone who was interested in creating such a use in downtown.

M. Blaisdell shares some concerns about foot traffic and effects of the relocation of Alec's Shoes. M. Blaisdell notes her visual survey shows approximate 60% of the shoppers are carrying Alec's bags.

S. Mahfuz shares thoughts about how each business should be able to stand on their own regardless of the presence of an anchor on Main Street. S Mahfuz notes that his company was not mentioned in the survey as complementing other downtown businesses.

R. Lannan notes how the Pompanoosuc Mills space has undergone many transitions over the years after Sears left and that the space took some time to find the right fit but eventually the right use came along and succeeded.

P. Shea notes John Koutsos owns the building Alec's is in and he has an incentive to find a use to occupy the building. P. Shea also notes that there is some need to establish an underlying message about the opportunity that exists with John's building.

The committee continues discussion about marketing responsibility, trends, and opportunities to establish a downtown "Brand" as a method to establish a presence.

R. Lannan inquiries about the status of Performing Arts Center study by Webb Management and if all the funds from the Downtown Improvement Committee allocation were spent.

T. Cummings provides a recap on the next steps for the Performing Arts Center study.

P. Shea notes many of the priorities on the survey list are currently projects which are underway.

S. Sarris notes that a larger Sunday farmers market would be a good priority project. The sentiment was supported by R. Lannan as both felt the Farmers Market shutting down Main Street between Factory and Pearl Street would be of direct benefit to both the market and an incentive for businesses on Main Street to open on Sundays. The group discusses the impact of the Farmers Market being on a Sunday verses Saturdays.

M. Blaisdell suggests a working group gather to discuss the potential of a Larger Farmers Market and present their findings during the September Meeting. M. Blaisdell suggested continuing funding for ArtVentures, lighting on the city garages, and the downtown trolley.

R. Lannan notes the \$66k in surplus parking revenue is the lowest the committee had seen but that they expect to see the revenue levels come back over the 100k mark again next year.

P. Shea notes Great American Downtown would like to play a role with marketing in downtown. Also would like to

M. Blaisdell states that she and J. Vayo will create a draft budget for the Holiday Lighting, Marketing, Arts program, & Farmers Market which will be the sole item of discussion during the August committee meeting.

R. LeFleur thanks the P Shea and City of Nashua staff for their efforts in making the downtown great.

The committee briefly discusses the composition of the committee and the regular meeting of the committee as well as the idea of a Business Improvement District and the history of the Service Advisory Committee. The committee notes a restaurant designee would be a good addition to the committee.

7. Adjournment and Next Meeting

MOTION TO ADJORN THE MEETING MADE BY R. LANNAN AT 9:30AM. SECONDED BY R. LEFLEUR AND APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The next meeting will take place on August 8th, 2016 at 7:45 a.m.